

FRANKFORD ARSENAL, Building 65
South of Tacony Street between Bridge
Street and the tracks of the former
Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-74C

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Frankford Arsenal, Building 65

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Location: South of Tacony Street between Bridge Street and the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

UTM: NW: E494120N4428480
NE: E494780 N4428750
SE: E495120 N4428260
SW: E494190 NEE28140
Quad: Frankford

Date of Construction: 1816-1976

Present Owner: Arsenal Associates
P.O. Box 26767
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Present Use: Vacant, industrial, offices

Significance: Established in 1816, the Frankford Arsenal served for three decades as a depot for the storage and repair of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition for the United States Army. From 1849 to 1976, the arsenal served as the nation's principal developer and manufacturer of small arms and artillery munitions. Frankford Arsenal pioneered mechanized production of munitions and developed numerous important innovations in ordnance and precision instruments. Technological innovations introduced at Frankford Arsenal made important contributions to the mechanization of American industry and the implementation of interchangeability and mass production techniques.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in August 1988 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement among the General Services Administration, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of several buildings at Frankford Arsenal.

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Constructed in 1918 as a small arms ammunition proof house, Building 65 is associated with the large-scale expansion of Frankford Arsenal that occurred after the United States' entry into World War I. The building's castle- or fortress-like appearance is a rare example of symbolic architecture at the arsenal.

Building 65 is a brick building with a concrete foundation and granite trim, measuring approximately 123 feet by 49 feet, with two single-story frame firing range wings extending to the south. These wings, sided with asbestos shingles are shed- and gable-roofed. The main block is designed in a mock-medieval style with a castellated or corbeled tower centered on the north facade. A 1918 granite datestone is centered on the north facade of this tower within a shallow, pointed arch that defines the blind entry. Paired castellated and corbeled tower are located near the east and west corners of the north facade. Single towers are located at the southeast and southwest corners of the main block. The main block has a flat, composition roof with a machiolated concrete parapet. Projecting semi-hexagonal turrets or oriels are located on the north and south facades. These have corbeled brick bases, concrete window sills, and semi-hexagonal concrete roofs. Other windows are tripartite and single, with concrete sills and wide concrete lintels with ears.

Additions to the original building include a concrete barrier walls, located at the south end of the west firing gallery wing, and a blank brick wall with concrete castellations, constructed in 1942, that extends from the southeast corner of the main block along the east side of a frame addition. Subsequent alterations include the conversion of the building into a laboratory facility after 1846, and the associated insertion of offices into the firing galleries, and the infilling of many window openings with brick.

Because Building 65 fronts onto Tacony Street, a public thoroughfare, it was designed in a mock-medieval style chosen for its imagery and symbolism rather than for its functional qualities. The building's architectural treatment is unique and, therefore, significant within the context of Frankford Arsenal. The building's use as a proof house and firing gallery are directly associated with the principal role of the arsenal, the design and testing of small arms munitions for the United States Army.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Milner Associates, "Historical and Archeological Survey of Frankford Arsenal," West Chester, PA: John Milner Associates, 1979.

Report prepared for the Department of the Army, Baltimore District, Corps of Engineers, Baltimore, Maryland. Copies on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

For complete overview of site, see HAER No. PA-74.

